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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 004184

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [IR](#) [UK](#)
SUBJECT: IRANIAN EXILE GROUP DEDICATED TO REGIME OVERTHROW
MEETS IN LONDON; NEXT MEETING IN WASHINGTON

REF: LONDON 0392

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11. (C) Summary. The Iranian Solidarity Congress (ISC), an umbrella organization designed to unite disparate Iranian exile groups, held the third in a series of meetings June 3-5 in London. The ISC's stated goal is to develop a common strategy to bring about the nonviolent overthrow of the current regime and establish a democratic government in Iran. The London meeting, officially titled "the London Conference of Unity for Democracy and Human Rights," drew eighty representatives from a wide range of ethnic groups and political factions. VOA Persia Correspondent Nazenine Ansari (protect), who attended the conference, told Embassy London there were rumors that some participants actually traveled from Iran with the blessing of more moderate members of the regime, including children of some of the original revolutionaries; however, she was unable to confirm those rumors. Notably absent were members of the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), who were reportedly approached to join the ISC but have chosen not to participate. The ISC is operating on a shoe-string budget, FCO sources tell us, and progress toward reaching a common agenda has been slow; nonetheless, Ansari said she believed Iranian President Ahmadinejad's extreme behavior is acting as a catalyst to unite formerly splintered factions. The next ISC meeting is scheduled to take place June 19-20 in Washington, DC, with the next meeting after that in Paris. End summary.

UNPRECEDENTED UNITY AT LONDON CONFERENCE...

12. (C) The London meeting, the third in a series (the first two were held earlier this year in Brussels and Berlin) marked the first time that such a wide spectrum of opposition groups had gathered in one venue, Ansari said. The group also reportedly reached a consensus that delegates should unify their actions in support of democracy and human rights in Iran. The reason for this unprecedented show of unity, Ansari told us, is the opposition's reaction to Iranian President Ahmadinejad, whom she deemed a "lightning rod." At this point, she said, Iranian exiles are so appalled by the turn the regime has taken that they are finally ready to put aside old differences. For example, a representative of the National Front, a group dedicated to righting the wrong done in 1953 by the coup against Mossadeh (and therefore anti-monarchist), announced at the meeting that it was finally time to put aside long standing differences and that he would be proud to stand next to Reza Pahlavi if it meant getting rid of Ahmadinejad.

13. (C) From political factions, representatives included disillusioned former regime supporters, former Khatami supporters, monarchists, and leftists; from the ethnic groups, representatives included Baluchis, Azeris, and Kurds, VOA Correspondent Avi Davidi (protect) told us. Ansari said she heard rumors but was unable to confirm that some

participants actually traveled from Iran with the blessing of more moderate members of the regime, including children of some of the original revolutionaries. Although the ISC reportedly approached the Mujahedin-e Khalq (MEK), they chose not to participate. The main organizers were Shahriar Ahi (of no fixed country), Victoria Azad (Sweden), Kambiz Roosta (Germany), Hasan Bagherzadeh (Germany), Rahim Parham (France), and Bagher Parham (France). Reza Pahlavi did not attend the conference or provide funding, but has lent his support to the ISC, according to Ansari. After the London meeting concluded, Ahi, Azad, and Rahim Parham flew to Paris to attend Qhlavi's meetings with members of the French National Assembly, where Pahlavi reportedly obtained agreement from the GOF to hold the next meeting after Washington in Paris. As one member of the delegation reportedly joked, "after (what they did for) Khomeini, the French owe us."

14. (C) According to FCO Iran analysts, who spoke to some conference attendees but did not attend, participants agreed on the following three principles: 1) the regime cannot be reformed from within; 2) the Iranian Solidarity Congress will not get involved in any military action or attempts to overthrow the regime by force; and 3) the group's activities will be restricted to raising the profile of Iran in foreign news, with special emphasis on human rights abuses. The group also elected a governing body, with Ahi receiving the most votes.

BUT STILL A WAYS TO GO

15. (C) FCO Iran analysts said the ISC is operating on a shoe string budget; one analyst pointed out that the meeting's location, Hangar Lane in West London, is an "insalubrious part of town." The analyst also noted that the meeting

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received little media attention, even inside Iran, where the regime's modus operandi is to draw attention to such meetings in the domestic press and then brand them as infidel plots. One reason for the lack of international press coverage, the analyst said, may have been the lack of English language knowledge among participants at the London conference, which was conducted in Farsi; Ansari said she thought that would not be a problem at the Washington conference, which presumably more Americans will attend. The London meeting, she said, was a meeting of the "intelligentsia" of the movement; she expects participants in Washington will be more "action-oriented."

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